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Inside Washington

STATINTL



Silos Seen In 6 Months



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WASHINGTON — In the intelligence controversy which grew out of the empty-headed Son Tay raid, Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird lamely lamented the lack of a camera which could see through roofs and inspect the already vacated prison camps.

Now, with the remarkable spy-satellite cameras locking down unobstructed, the secretary is in the middle of a new intelligence dispute. He is accused of exaggerating — even misrepresenting — the threat posed by a new generation of missile silos within the Soviet Union.

It is one of those vitally important arguments which cannot be resolved for the present. Are the Russians ominously escalating their force of intercontinental missiles (ICBMs)? Or are they simply modernizing the missile force to increase its survivability? In the intelligence community the experts are saying it will take six to eight months, given the present pace of activity at Russian missile sites, to have information on which to base a clear and definitive answer.

Meanwhile Laird's critics are free to claim that the secretary has added to the Pentagon's credibility gap. His supporters, on the other hand, will keep saying that the Russians may be opening a gap in land-based missiles.

PENTAGON, CIA AGREE — Contrary to published reports which assert that CIA and the Pentagon are at odds in the matter, it can be stated that the intelligence community is generally agreed as to what is being done at missile sites in Russia. The trouble is that no one knows what the Russians INTEND to do.

Confusion also arises from different appraisals, made at different times, as the work

progressed under the camera eye of the spy satellites. Here is how the pictures unfolded:

Early this year, after having abandoned work for months on 18 new silos for their giant SS-9 missile, the Russians holes for a larger and newly configured missile silo. Work went ahead rapidly at test sites and on operational missile fields.

Sen. Henry M. Jackson, D-Wash., gave the first warning of the ominous development in March. Subsequently, Laird and his Pentagon aides confirmed the existence of new and larger holes and said they could well mean new and larger missiles.

Recently, however, the photographs have shown that the larger holes were dug to accommodate reinforcing liners to make the silos more resistant if attacked. Whatever else may be planned, the Russians are "hardening" the new silos, to use the word the Pentagon uses.

Now Laird's critics are saying that, since the new silos are mostly in missile fields which harbor the smaller SS-11 missile, the Soviet activity is just a hardening program addressed largely to the SS-11. They note that Russian participants at the SALT talks have informally described the work as a modernization program.

NO MIND READER S — Both sides in the controversy get some support from related information. Supporting the modernization thesis, for example, are removing some of their old ICBMs from the operations fields.

On the other hand, there is evidence to suggest that the Russians are planning for a series of missile tests. So Laird and his Pentagon experts are still inclined to think that a new missile, or perhaps a couple of them, are eventually to be deployed in the new

There is, in short, an argument to be made that the Russians are about to install new missiles, perhaps with MIRVed warheads. There is also an argument to be made that the Russians are simply acting to protect their missile silos much as we have acted to protect ours.

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SALT Agreement: Genocide Pact?

By ROBERT L. BARTLEY

WASHINGTON—With good luck American and Soviet negotiators will agree on strategic arms limitation sometime this year, writing the doctrines of "mutual deterrence" and "assured destruction" into a formal agreement. Despite the general jubilation that will result, some experts will be deeply worried. For a dissenting school of strategic thinkers believes those doctrines add up to a "genocide pact."

The phrase comes from Fred Charles Ikle of Rand Corp. He and a few other analysts, notably Donald G. Brennan of the Hudson Institute, are deeply suspicious of the prevailing notion of deterring war by insuring that each of two competing nations can utterly destroy the other. Above all, they are appalled at the millions and millions of innocent civilians who would be killed if deterrence somehow broke down and war did start.

The doctrine of "assured destruction" became the bedrock of U.S. strategic posture during Robert McNamara's tenure as Secretary of Defense. The thinking is that if the U.S. can absorb a Russian nuclear strike and still retaliate with enough power to destroy the Soviet Union as a society, the first strike will never take place. When each power can retaliate to obliterate the other, the theory continues, the result is a "mutual deterrence" that makes nuclear war unthinkable.

Mutual deterrence and assured destruction will almost certainly provide the intellectual foundation for any arms pact that may emerge from the forthcoming round of SALT at Helsinki. The recent joint U.S.-Soviet announcement said that negotiators would "concentrate" on limiting anti-ballistic missiles, but would also agree on "certain measures" to restrict offensive missiles. The clear implication is that any agreement will follow the assured destruction doctrine in limiting the defense more sharply than the offense.

This order of priorities conforms to the assured-destruction logic because it would insure that neither side could escape destruction if a nuclear exchange took place, thus building the maximum "unthinkability" into the use of nuclear weapons. Opponents of the doctrine would reverse the priorities, limiting the offense more sharply than the defense to insure that any exchange would produce fewer deaths. This difference, in fact, has been at the root of much of the domestic debate over ABM proposals.

Ironically, assured-destruction-type deterrence seems likely to be formalized internationally just when it's losing its hallowed status among Western strategic thinkers. Those openly attacking it are few; most analysts continue to accept it for want of a persuasive alternative. But among its defenders, the self-satisfaction of the McNamara era has given way to a new uneasiness.

This shows in President Nixon's 1971 foreign policy message which contains a line saying the President should not be "limited to the indiscriminate destruction of civilian populations as the sole possible response to chal-

lenges." The administration has found immense difficulties in translating this desire for flexibility into specific weapons and tactics.

A Small Step

The Nixon administration concept of "sufficiency," however, is at least a small step away from assured destruction. In the heyday of the latter nuclear-force levels were decided by a computer programmed to calculate the number of warheads necessary to destroy given percentages of the Soviet population and production capacity. While "sufficiency" is a less clear-cut concept, it seems to mean that force levels and similar decisions are ultimately matters for political judgment.

The new uneasiness about current deterrent postures is cropping up not only in political quarters but in intellectual ones. The latest annual survey by the Institute for Strategic Studies in London found, for example, that "deterrence still seemed to be an overwhelmingly powerful force at the end of 1970." But it also noted, "some fear was an inevitable element in the strategic balance, if only because the concept of nuclear deterrence had been constructed on an assumption of reciprocal rationality which could never be completely guaranteed."

This is precisely the point at which critics of assured-destruction deterrence concentrate their attack. Obviously mutual deterrence means no rational man would deliberately start a war, but who ever said war is likely to be started by the deliberate plan of rational men? Yet for the purpose of deterring rationally planned war, the current nuclear posture insures that war starting from any cause will automatically result in the slaughter of the majority of the population in both the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

Rationality has in fact played scant part in most past wars, to judge by the evidence assembled by Rand's Dr. Ikle (pronounced E-Clay) in his new book, "Every War Must End" (Columbia University Press). In tracing how wars in this century have been brought to a close, he finds that those who started them have not even thought about the problems of ending them.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, for example, their government had made no effort to think through how such a war would ultimately end. World War I started though no one wanted it. Once wars are actually under way, he finds, they grow ever more resistant to rationality, tending to continue beyond any logical purpose because of internal political developments in the warring nations.

If history is a guide, nuclear war, too, would be most likely to start in some less-than-rational fashion. Dr. Ikle conceives of a number of circumstances in which deterrence might be of little help: an accidental missile launch, a non-nuclear war that escalates because of the powerful political forces war engenders, the advent of national leaders whose philosophy includes, as Mussolini's did, living

There is even a possibility that leaders on one side might come to believe that the other would not in fact launch a retaliatory strike. However rational the threat of retaliation is, actually carrying it out when the threat has failed is a separate question. What if an enemy's first strike has hit your military installations, and the enemy retained further missiles that could strike your cities? Would you then kill his civilians?

Elegant but Fragile Logic

The point is not that nuclear war will come this way or that way, but that the logic of mutual deterrence is elegant but fragile. To work it must persist forever, but it is too clean, too logical, too pristine. Dr. Ikle says, "We have this rational structure that must survive decade after decade if we are to survive decade after decade, that's my main theme."

The alternative to assured-destruction deterrence would be negotiating armaments postures that limit offense and encourage defense. Dr. Brennan says "The SALT context is a ready-made opportunity to make a dramatic difference," providing the talks are aimed at an agreement reducing offensive forces and allowing defensive build-ups on both sides. In the absence of an arms agreement, he has elaborated a unilateral posture of maintaining general parity while spending a greater proportion of money on defense.

Whether an alternative can work in practice as well as theory depends, however, on the technical feasibility of missile defense. Most experts agree that a well-designed system could be useful in defending hard targets like missile silos, but defense of the civilian population is quite another matter.

Dr. Brennan believes that if offensive forces were reduced to the equivalent of 500 Minutemen, a \$20 billion missile defense around the top 50 cities could save perhaps 45 of them. The prospect of losing five cities, he adds, would still deter any rational leader. Over time he has been considerably more optimistic about defense than other planners, however, and in any event negotiating a 500-missile offensive limit would require astounding political feats.

Still, there is always the chance that a highly effective defense can be developed eventually; even a less effective one would still save some lives, and you have to start somewhere. The present technical problems are little reason, Dr. Ikle notes, to negotiate a treaty "closing the door on defense. That may be a door we want to go through." Yet the thrust of arms talks so far seems to be sharp limits on defense in the pursuit of assured destruction. Dr. Brennan remarks, "People are

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Russian Missile Faulted

Study Finds SS-9 Warheads Lack Accuracy

By Michael Getler
Washington Post Staff Writer

A new study sponsored by the Pentagon and CIA estimates that multiple warheads flight-tested thus far with the giant Soviet SS-9 intercontinental missiles are not accurate enough to knock out U.S. Minutemen ICBMs in a surprise attack, according to informed government sources.

Furthermore, the study is said to estimate that the warhead accuracy probably cannot be improved enough with the techniques now being used to achieve a first-strike capability.

The study, which was completed in April, was carried out for the government by TRW Inc., a large defense contractor in California with an excellent technical reputation.

Informed officials say there is no evidence that the Soviets have flight-tested any new kind of multiple warhead for the SS-9 beyond those discussed in the study.

While some additional tests of the big missile are expected later this year, officials say they are uncertain whether these flights will reveal a new and more accurate version of the SS-9 or will merely be tests of existing missiles launched from protective silos the Soviets are building.

In any event, some government weapons analysts view the new study as lessening still further Pentagon fears that by 1975 the Soviets could deal a surprise knock-out to all but a handful of America's 1,000-missile Minuteman force.

Last year, TRW made a similar technical assessment of the SS-9 for the Pentagon. In that study, officials say the firm gave a "lukewarm" endorsement, based on earlier SS-9 testing, to the idea that the Soviet triplet warheads could be of the MIRV type in which each of the three warheads can be sent to a separate Minuteman silo with enough accuracy to knock it out.

The new study, officials say, reverses that earlier opinion that MIRVs were involved.

Weapons experts in a number of government agencies, including the Pentagon, estimate that it would take the Soviets two to three more years to perfect and begin deployment of a more accurate MIRV. It would then take several more years to equip the entire force of SS-9s, which now numbers about 288.

Agreement Sought

The Pentagon has estimated that the Soviets would need some 450 such MIRV-equipped missiles to wipe out the Minuteman force. At the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks, the United States is trying to work out an agreement that would limit the SS-9s to about 300.

The new study also appears to contradict recent Pentagon estimates that the Soviets will have a MIRV "capability" in 1972. However, some officials say it is true that the current Soviet multiple warhead system could be viewed as a MIRV, except that it is not a very good one.

The Soviets are said to use a system of small rails inside the nose cone of the SS-9 to launch the three warheads to separate targets that are reasonably close together. By varying the time each warhead moves down these rails, the missiles can be made to land in a pattern that has, in tests, resembled the layout of Minuteman silos.

This, at first, led some analysts to believe that the Soviets were developing a MIRV to attack Minuteman in a surprise first strike.

Now, however, it has apparently been concluded that the technique is both inaccurate

and also inflexible because the Minuteman patterns vary widely.

The U.S. MIRV now being deployed on the Minuteman and Poseidon submarines is more sophisticated, using a so-called "space bus" with its own guidance system to target each warhead accurately in the bus to a widely separated target before it is launched.

Less Powerful Weapons

The U.S. MIRVs, however, are only a fraction as powerful as the huge Soviet weapons, and the Pentagon has declared that this lack of nuclear punch also means that Minutemen are no threat to Soviet missiles buried in underground silos.

On Capitol Hill yesterday, the SS-9 also figured in sharp questioning of high-ranking Pentagon officials by Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.).

Symington, at an open session of a Senate Foreign relations subcommittee on disarmament, claimed that Pentagon witnesses were saying different things about a possible U.S.-Soviet agreement at SALT than had the chief U.S. negotiator, Gerard Smith, before the same committee in a closed hearing on Tuesday.

Appearing at yesterday's session was Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Dr. John S. Foster Jr., the Pentagon's chief scientist.

Both officials, under questioning, said that any SALT agreement must include simultaneous limitation on offensive missiles as well as ABM defense systems.

"Your position," Symington said to Foster, "is not the same as Smith's." Symington said he understood Smith to say in closed session that the hoped for SALT agreement would provide for an ABM agreement while talks continue on the offensive weapons question. Foster said it was his understanding that "any controls would go in simultaneously."

Symington pressed Foster to say if Smith's interpretation was "right or wrong." Foster hesitated, then said he did not feel it was helpful "to get engaged in semantics."

Foster said he did not think there were any differences in his understanding of the

hoped for agreement and Smith's, although defense officials later conceded privately that it was not yet clear if the Soviets completely understood or agree to U.S. goals on limiting offensive missiles.

After Moorer mentioned the SS-9 threat against the "survivability of our ICBMs," Symington, who is also a member of the Armed Services Committee — including the CIA subcommittee — said he did not agree with "the assessment that the SS-9 was accurate enough for a first strike."